

Israel-Palestine Relations



STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The history between Israel and Palestine is long and very complicated. Ever since the nation of Israel was founded after World War II, both Israel and Palestine have been fighting for control of the country. Palestinians feel that Israel has unlawfully taken their land, where Palestinians lived long before World War II. Israelis see the land as their homeland, which justifies Israel having control of the nation.

After many years and many wars, Israel and Palestine currently live within the same borders, but operate as two separate nations. Palestine has control of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and Israel controlling the rest of the country. Its during this rather peaceful period in the history of Israel and Palestine that Palestine has decided to make a bid to the United Nations to become a fully independent nation, with voting rights in the UN.

The Security Council has the duty to decide whether or not Palestine should be allowed to become an independent state. But, it will not be an easy debate. Israel does not want Palestine to gain voting rights in the UN and, seeing that the United States is Israel's biggest ally, the United States does not want Palestine to gain voting rights either. And US's veto power may stop Palestine's dream of becoming a full-fledged member of the UN.

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM:

The current Israeli-Palestinian Conflict can trace its origins to the early 20th century when the area of Palestine became a British **Mandate** after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Following the British Mandate, there was a wave of immigration from Jews in Europe. Tensions began to arise between the Jewish immigrants from Europe and the Muslim Arab population that were already living in Palestine. Throughout the next few decades, violence escalated between the two populations. In 1947, the British government handed over the Mandate to the United Nations due to the growing conflict in the territory. On May 14th, 1948 the Jewish state of Israel was established,



Mandate: authority over a region; ability to govern a region

and British troops officially left the area.

At the same time, armies from Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria invaded Israel in **retaliation**, but the Israeli army quickly defeated them. In 1964, surrounding Arab governments who wanted to make sure an Arab political unit under their control formed the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) within Palestine. In 1967, a six-day conflict broke out which became known as the Six-Day War. This was a conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors. This short war led to Israel nearly doubling its territory therefore displacing about 500,000 Palestinians. About six years later the Yom Kippur/Ramadan war broke out when Egypt and Syria launched strikes into Israel in an attempt to regain land lost in 1967.

In the late 1980's, Palestinians grew angry about the conditions they were living under, and the treatment they received at the hands of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). In 1989, the First Intifada broke out, which included extreme rioting by the Palestinians against the IDF. The organization, Hamas, was born out of the Intifada, and Hamas would come to control the Gaza strip and be labeled a terrorist organization by the United States and Israel. In 1993, the Oslo Accords took place in Norway. The agreement stated that the Palestinians would recognize Israel if they would begin the process of **de-occupying** Palestine. The 21st century has seen multiple attacks on both sides and a heightened state of conflict between Israel and Palestine. ⁱ

In 2011, Palestine formally made a bid to become a voting member of the United Nations. Currently, Palestine is recognized as an observer state to the UN, which means that it can participate in the international debate, but does not have the right to vote on any UN resolutions. Palestine wants to be able to participate fully in the United Nations, including voting.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM:

In 2012, President Abbas brought forth the issue of Palestinian statehood to the United Nations. He wrote a letter to Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel asking for a freeze in Jewish settlement construction in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, release of Palestinian prisoners, and a return to the 1967 borders in order to restart the peace negotiations.ⁱⁱ While they did not obtain full member status, they were granted “non-member observer status”. This is voted on by the UN General Assembly and needs a majority in order to pass.ⁱⁱⁱ The General Assembly voted overwhelmingly in support of Palestine’s non-member observer status. 138 countries voted in favor, 9 against, and 41 abstained. The 9 states to vote against were: Canada, Czech Republic, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Panama, Palau, and the United States. President Abbas spoke before the General Assembly stating that following Israel’s aggression, the international community has “the

Retaliation: counterattack

De-occupying: to stop have citizens live in a certain area



last chance” to save the prospect of a two-state peace solution. A delegate from Israel also spoke emphasizing that a “one-sided” solution will not bring about peace, and that Israel is in favor of living in peace side by side with Palestine, but only when Israel’s security is protected.^{iv}

YES TO A PALESTINIAN STATE

The Palestinians feel that they have the right to **self-determination**⁵ and statehood just as the Israelis have a state. Palestine currently has an observer status in the United Nations, which is just short of a full member with voting rights. Applying for full time membership in the UN has to be approved by the Security Council, which is a problem because the United States routinely states that they would **veto**⁶ any proposal of Palestinian statehood.^v Many Palestinians feel that they are discriminated against and do not have the same opportunities as their Jewish counterparts in the current situation.^{vi} Israel has long been weary of Hamas, however, many argue that by continuously crushing Palestinian chances of statehood, the **legitimacy**⁷ of President Abbas is being challenged. Many Palestinians that President Abbas’ policies are not helping Palestine become an independent state, leading many to give more support to Hamas and other “extremist” groups.^{vii} Many countries support the idea of Palestinian statehood. In late 2012, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas pushed a bid in the U.N. for Palestinian statehood.^{viii}

Many argue that having a proper Palestinian state, could be safer for Israel. If Palestine were to become an independent state, the major tension between Israel and Palestine (over Palestine being recognized as an independent country) would be gone. Some believe that without that point of contention between the two states, there would be no more violence.

NO TO A PALESTINIAN STATE

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has stated in a recent interview that Israel has two main concerns. Israel must feel secure within its borders and must be recognized as a Jewish state by the Palestinians.^{ix} Israel does not feel that they are close to feeling safe yet. The geographic structure of Palestine also brings about more problems. It is currently two separate entities, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Both of the pieces of land have gone in different directions in politics. The West Bank is led by the political party Fatah and the Gaza Strip is led by Hamas. Hamas is the biggest problem for Israel. There has been cyclical violence between Israel and the Gaza Strip by way of bombs, rockets, and suicide attacks/ martyr missions.^x The possibility of a Palestinian state could cause issues of security in the Middle East, and already volatile region.

PAST INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS:

There have been many United Nations Resolutions concerning Israel and Palestine, and the following are some of the more prominent resolutions.

⁵ Self-Determination: ability of a nation to govern itself

⁶ Veto: right to reject a decision

⁷ Legitimacy: legal or lawful

Resolution 242: *November 22, 1967* This resolution was issued following the Six-Day War. It stated that Israel was responsible for finding a realistic solution to the Palestinian refugee problem as well as Israeli armed forces to withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, The Golan Heights, and the West Bank. Resolution 338 was issued following the Yom Kippur War in 1973 reaffirming this resolutions implementation

Resolution 1322: *October 2000* This resolution was drafted as violence began in the Gaza Strip. The high numbers of deaths of Palestinians were noted in this document, and the UN reiterated the need for a solution to end this conflict and that Resolution 242 must be upheld on a peace agreement. ^{xi}

Failed Resolution: *February 2011* The UN voted on passing a resolution condemning Israeli settlements in Palestine and those made after 1967 as illegal. The resolution also urged both Palestine and Israel to work towards a peaceful two-state solution. This resolution failed because the United States vetoed it saying that while they disagree with Israeli settlements, this proposed resolution will only hurt the peace process. ^{xii}

Questions to Consider:

1. Does your nation believe Palestine should get voting rights in the United Nations? Why?
2. Who are the main allies of your nation? Do they support Israel or Palestine? Do any of them have veto power in the Security Council?
3. Does your nation think that Palestine gaining independence will stop the violence between Israel and Palestine?

APPENDIX A

Vote on Status of Palestine at United Nations

The draft resolution on the Status of Palestine at the United Nations (document A/67/L28) was adopted by a recorded vote of 138 in favor to 9 against, with 41 abstentions, as follows:

In Favor: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against: Canada, Czech Republic, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federal States of), Nauru, Panama, United States of America

Abstain: Albania, Andorra, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Estonia, Fiji, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malawi, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Papa New Guinea, Paraguay, Poland, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, United Kingdom, Vanuatu

Absent: Equatorial Guinea, Kiribati, Liberia, Madagascar, Ukraine

CITATIONS AND PHOTO CREDITS

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